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## **Translation Traces in the Archive: Unfixing Documents, Destabilising Evidence**

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### Abstract:

This article focuses on a challenge faced by a collaborative research team: the Protestant missionary archive. While we found a number of autobiographical accounts in several South Asian languages, with statements on several documents stating that they were translations, we were unable to trace both the source and target text in each case. How could we compare texts in translation without complete versions of their source texts? More importantly, how could we engage constructively with the implied presence of the source texts in the face of their material absence? This meant developing a new set of questions on translation and its relationship with the archive. Drawing on Foucault's critique of 'the archive' and his argument for an 'archaeological' engagement with archives, we examine how to treat what we term 'translation traces' in the documents we uncovered: bilingual texts, translated extracts, fragments, and evidence of repeated relay translations. We ask further, what role translation, invisibilized as it is, plays in the documentation of lives. The archive can be conceptualised as a 'contact zone' where languages, texts, and collective memory intersect through translation. We contribute to the discipline of translation studies by suggesting some means of addressing the way archives from the past inevitably shape our study and understanding of material presence and function of translation in specific historical periods. Finally, we argue that highlighting the role of translation opens up new ways of conceptualising and working with historical archives.

## Translation Traces in the Archive: Unfixing Documents, Destabilising Evidence

For the disciplinary historian, the archive may fairly be described as a site of selection and classification, of framing and authorizing—and hence making intelligible. In Foucauldian terms, the archive authorizes what may be said, laying down the rules of the “sayable,” negating (making inaudible and illegible) much that comes to be classified as “non-sense,” “gibberish,” madness and is dispatched therefore to a domain outside agential, rational history. In this process of selecting, framing authorizing, as even the most hard-boiled of traditional historians will acknowledge, every archive necessarily excludes a great deal that is not of direct interest to its custodians [...] the very act of archiving is accompanied by a process of un-archiving. (Pandey, 2014: 3-4)

What attitudes towards translation do historical archives display? Any historian working with archives is well aware of the fragmentary and unreliable nature of collections of past or present objects. The missing pieces frustrate attempts to re-construct stories but, in doing so, also provide clues to the networks that tie the collection of (random?) information to the control of knowledge. This article suggests that examining the value placed on translation allows us to probe one set of mechanisms by which specific forms of knowledge and representation are constructed as “evidence” of past events or experiences despite or through the very act of destroying material evidence of translation. While some components of translation projects are carefully preserved and interpreted, others are discarded; but importantly, both seemingly contradictory acts work together to control and fix one set of interpretations as valid. What “evidence” of translation processes is considered worth collecting, classifying, and preserving and why? Paying attention to translation and engaging it as a tool of critical interpretation may be one way to answer Burton’s (2005: 8) call to ‘denaturalize’ the production and boundaries of archives and historicize the production of archival collections.

These questions regarding the place of translation in archival research became increasingly central when researching<sup>1</sup> autobiographical representations of conversions to Christianity from the late eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century in colonial South Asia.<sup>2</sup> The aim was two-fold: first, to identify and collect autobiographical accounts of religious conversion to Christianity, tracing their translation history; and second, to study autobiographical accounts of conversion to examine how individuals narrate their conversion from one religious framework to another. The object was to examine to what extent language use carried markers of change as conversion accounts translated from one language to another. Accounts written in two European languages, English and German or in two South Asian languages, Tamil and Marathi, were examined alongside accounts that were translated into English and/or German. Some of these original and translated accounts were printed in journals published in present-day India and northern Sri Lanka.

The several accounts of religious conversion we encountered in the archives suggested that religious conversion materializes into a concrete “event” when lived experiences (ephemeral, chaotic texts) are narrated into a “story” (a coherent narrative) that

can be repeatedly accessed—that is, read, re-told, and translated. Conversion accounts were translated between and from South Asian languages into English or German for audiences in Europe who were supporting missions in South Asia. As the collection of articles published in *Narratives of Transformation* (ed. Israel and Zavos, 2018) indicate, the translations often highlighted a secondary aspect of the conversion account—for instance, pushing specific forms of femininity as more desirable than others (Dandekar 2018). Translation, thus, played a crucial role in not only the material circulation of conversion accounts beyond their first moment of enunciation but also in the conceptualisation of the categories of “the native convert” (Wakankar 2018) “confession,” (Frenz 2018) and “religious reform” (Israel 2018) in missionary and colonial representations.

In this article, however, we focus on the hardest challenge we faced as a team: the Protestant missionary archive (henceforth, “missionary archive”).<sup>3</sup> While we found many more autobiographical accounts than we had anticipated, with written statements on several documents claiming that they were translations, we were unable to trace both the source and target texts in most cases to arrive at complete pairs for analysis. The methodological challenges relating to how texts in translation could be compared without complete versions of their source texts (or vice versa) were just one set of questions. These questions were resolved with a focus on the contexts within which translations were undertaken and the material, intellectual, and even spiritual considerations that played a part in the commissioning and production of the translated conversion accounts. More importantly, we were stimulated to engage critically with the implied presence of the source texts in the face of their material absence. We were also able to compare in a few cases two or more translated versions of the same conversion story, as we will show in greater detail later in this article. But the gaps in the archive further invited us to develop a new set of questions about translation and its relationship with the archive—that is, how important was the issue of translation to the conceptualisation and development of the missionary archive? What kinds of questions can we pose regarding the missionary archive and the materials that it preserves? What analyses could we offer of the many silences on textual histories of translation that it concealed? Given the central role translation played in promoting conversion narratives and extending individual memories of personal change into collective, social memory, it seems odd that more concrete by-products of translation (i.e. translation drafts, corrections, and correspondence on the translation commission) were not preserved as assiduously as many other pieces of paraphernalia of the missionary enterprise in South Asia. How do we read such an archive, where translation’s presence is implicit, let alone work with it?

### The Missionary Archive and an Archaeology of Translation in South Asia

The challenge posed to the idea of the archive as a physical repository of material evidences of the past in Michel Foucault’s (1969/1994) conception of archaeology has encouraged more critical engagement with the assembling and function of archives. For Foucault, the archaeological task constitutes a way of undertaking historical analysis of an archive. Archives in Foucault’s terms are “systems of statements”: “...we have in the density of discursive practices, systems that establish statements as events (with their own conditions and domain of appearance) and things (with their own possibility and field of use). They are all these systems of statements (whether events or things) that I propose to call *archive*” (Foucault

1969/1994: 128; emphasis in original). The archive “reveals the rules of a practice that enables statements both to survive and to undergo regular modification. It is *the general system of the formation and transformation of statements*” (1969/1994: 130). The archive is governed by institutional infrastructures, but, importantly, an archive cannot be described in its totality. Echoing Smart’s (2002: 48) summary of Foucault’s descriptions of the archive and archaeology are relevant to this article’s engagement with the missionary archive: for Foucault while the archive constitutes the set of rules which define the limits and forms of human expression, conservation, memory and appropriation, the aim of the archaeological task is to describe the archive, that is the social and ideological conditions in different historical periods that make it possible for a set of statements to survive, disappear, get re-used, be repressed or censored.

While Foucault’s analyses have been used to deconstruct several kinds of archives and have influenced various historical projects in recent scholarship, they have not, so far, been applied to understanding the use and place of translation in the missionary archive. Mission studies, the primary disciplinary field that engages with missionary archives, has for too long depended on its records or artefacts as a stable repository of evidence for the reconstruction of mission history.<sup>4</sup> Most often, this history is presented from the perspective of the mission societies that both authored the records and arranged for the preservation of the documents. Equally pertinent, if not more so for translation scholarship, mission studies have ignored the question of language and the extent to which language played a part in the conceptualisation of this archive. With the exception of Bible translation, where language and translation debates have by and large been preserved in considerable detail, the missionary archive does not scrupulously preserve materials in non-European languages, a point taken up for further discussion later in this article.

As a project team, our engagement with language and translation in the missionary archive led in two complementary directions: archival and archaeological. First, the archival entailed identifying the systematic organisation and transformation of statements on conversion, and how references to translation feature in these statements. And at what points statements on (and of) translation present as ‘historical evidence’ of the movement of conversion narratives across languages. This intent to examine material traces of translation in itself poses a challenge to the way the missionary archive organizes information of its activities and systematizes knowledge of the communities that it seeks to represent. The second direction lay in the archaeological—that is, in analysing the discursive formation of this missionary archive: how may one describe such an archive and its governing rules? Which discursive statements on conversion are recognized as valid and which are censored? What individuals or communities have had access to or been represented in particular kinds of discursive statements on Christian conversion?

#### Material Presences: Primary Sources in the Missionary Archives

In the duration of the project, we examined narratives of South Asians converting to Protestant Christianity during a period of intense debate on social and religious reform. These accounts are located mainly in missionary archives in the UK (SOAS, the British Library, University of Birmingham Special Collections, National Library of Scotland, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) Archive at Cambridge University Library, and Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) Archive at the Bodleian Library

Oxford), in Germany (mainly at the Franckesche Stiftungen, Halle and Leipzig Mission Archives), Switzerland (Basel), and the US (at Columbia, Yale, and California). There are further archives in France, Portugal, and the Vatican Library; however, we did not research these archives because they contain records mainly from Catholic missions in South Asia whereas our focus was on Protestant conversion accounts, and a much larger research team with expertise in French, Portuguese and Latin would be required to examine the extensive Catholic archives for conversion narratives.

It is worth noting here that there are very few accounts preserved in libraries or archives within present-day India and Sri Lanka. There are several historical reasons behind this lack of narrative documentation in Indian or Sri Lankan archives (either those linked to Christian missions or more general historical archives). At the material level, extreme weather conditions in South Asia are not conducive to the preservation of paper or palm-leaf manuscripts, making archiving a very expensive proposition. At an ideological level, the idea that history begins and ends with Europe was predominant in the nineteenth century, which accounts for the shipping across to Europe of any documents considered valuable in some form. This means that conversion narratives, along with accompanying documents recording conversion, were usually sent to mission headquarters located in Europe or North America, where decisions to either preserve or destroy the documents were presumably taken.

In this instance, where the missionary archive is embedded within the larger process of imperial archiving, the physical and material presence of an archive, its geographical location, and who continues to have access to it are relevant factors, despite Foucault's opening up of our understanding of archive as a systematization of statements rather than as physical entity. Detailed autobiographical and biographical accounts of the conversion of South Asians were recorded as valid "statements" (in the Foucauldian sense) on conversion and continue to be maintained by institutions that are difficult for South Asians located in the global south to access.<sup>5</sup> If archives are assembled to sustain individual memory and function to preserve collective memories, whose collective memory is constructed and where? The answer points to the maintenance of the missionary past rather than the acolyte's. A focus on translation facilitates reading against the logic of the missionary archive, multiple voices and hands become visible, challenging the ventriloquised "autobiographical" account that purports to speak for the convert.

Conversion narratives survive in various published and manuscript formats. Most extant narratives survive in translation rather than in source languages, which is unusual given the customary importance placed on "original" or source-language texts rather than on their translations. Further, although translation is presented in these texts as a neutral, instrumentalist act to make an account available to a wider audience, translation choices almost always introduce shifts in meaning or emphases.<sup>6</sup> Translations are after all "re-statements" in another language and inevitably draw attention to the relationship *between* statements. There is little evidence of whether autobiographers had opportunities to interact with translators or whether they ever objected to any of the changes. While the primary archivists (in the conventional sense) were missionaries based in South Asia and in Europe, the archival imperative (in the Foucauldian sense) derived its energy from a wider network of systems beyond Christian missions, intersecting with discourses on religions, languages, trade, and colonial governance. These various contradictions and gaps in the missionary

archives invite us to examine how to work critically with the materials collected and engage with “archive as system” that underpins these material presences.

### Missionary (Un)Archiving: Ordering the Autobiographical Discourse

Drawing on Foucault’s (1969/1994) analysis of the archive emphasizes that a) it is not a neutral repository of documents of the past but a politically interested representation of it, and b) every act of archiving is accompanied by a process of ‘unarchiving,’ a term borrowed from Pandey (2014). Through this lens, we examine the status of translation in the building of the missionary archives. By and large we found more ‘translations’ than ‘source’ texts. This is unusual given European attitudes that have for long ascribed far more significance to source texts and their preservation than to their translations. But, how can we engage with the fact of translation preserved in various statements but where the evidence of the translator’s labour—the drafts, the notes, and in most cases, and most crucially, the source text—are not archived? The omission of the translation process in the archive may be interpreted as a deliberate concealment of power relations between the European missionary and the native convert. Translation was perceived or projected as instrumental rather than constitutive, a practical tool in the service of mission rather than an interpretative framework facilitating the ideology of mission. It was, thus, a “secondary” activity in the construction and preservation of conversion narratives. This understanding may prompt most researchers, not attuned to the significance of translation and language, to pass by the event of translation as irrelevant to the production of the texts they are studying and to the re-construction of lives or life narratives. It appears that the very process of archiving translation activity, thus, systematising translation statements, also at the same time disenfranchises translation by stripping it of its ideological potency and transformative presence.

Despite the evidence of translation enumerated above—and it is possible to give more such examples—one of the frustrations of working with the missionary archives was this double-sided approach to translation. What do we do with materials where translation has clearly occurred but both language versions were not preserved? Take, for example, the number of short conversion accounts (at least fifteen) available in the Church Missionary Society archives in English,<sup>7</sup> with evidence of translation in superscriptions that state that it is a “true copy” of a “translation of a narrative of the life of x or y.”<sup>8</sup> Each document also has the name of the translator inscribed in a beautiful cursive hand. In some cases, interestingly, the word translation is crossed out with an ‘X’ across it.<sup>9</sup> Why incorporate this declaration of translation? On the one hand, this inclusion emphasized the “truth” of the conversion story—there really was an individual, as the document claims, who narrated his conversion. The additional information that translation occurred seems to serve as “evidence” here, pointing to the “original” or “source” of the narrative—the convert, the “event” of conversion, and their story. Therefore, this account is apparently not a fictitious one constructed by missionaries. Evidencing the genuine nature of conversion, was indeed, a very important aspect of missionary record-keeping, as has been shown in recently published articles (*South Asia*, 2018). On the other hand, it was clearly thought unnecessary to preserve conversion statements articulated in the South Asian languages. Accounts, spoken or written, in the South Asian languages were perhaps not perceived as contributing usefully to mission “history.” When South Asian-language documents do survive, this appears to be due to an accident in the history-making process. For instance, when W. B. Addis, missionary in South

India, writes to his colleagues in the London Missionary Society that he has enclosed fourteen Tamil journals written by converts and itinerant preachers, it seems that most of them were either lost or destroyed upon arrival. The one Tamil account (1833) that did survive seems to have done so because it was inserted between the pages of its English translation; its corners curled up and stuck together, meant it remained undetected. This also suggests that the English translation was never read or examined after its travel to the missionary archive. Rather than appearing as a repository of “intentional remembering” to use Appadurai’s (2003) phrase, this surviving account, in both source and target languages, appears to be a case of unintentional remembering. Incidentally, A. R. Venkatachalapathy, one of the project’s advisors and an expert on Tamil autobiography, believes that we may have found the earliest extant autobiographical statement in Tamil. Similarly, the autobiographical manuscript account in Tamil of Pakkiyam Pillai was another of our rare finds in the Leipzig Mission archives, stored at Halle (Germany). But why are so few accounts written by South Asians preserved in the language of composition? And how do we read the process of un-archiving going on here? Pursuing these questions is an archeological engagement with the disappearance or repression of South Asian-language conversion accounts not considered valid “statements.”

In colonial South Asia, the varieties and statuses of South Asian languages had been an important subject of scholarship and debate. Many missionaries have been hailed for their efforts in standardizing and developing scholarship in South Asian languages, as well as for promoting primary school education in South Asian languages.<sup>10</sup> Most learnt to read and write in the dominant languages of the regions in which they worked. But we can only speculate on why more accounts were not recorded in Tamil, Marathi or other South Asian languages. Some rare accounts are multilingual, in that an English narrative account contains short pieces of dialogue in Tamil or Marathi in their respective scripts. However, in most cases, even these are either translated into English or German or transliterated into Roman script. There appears a pattern of neglect of documents authored by South Asians in South Asian languages, where efforts are focused on preserving the English or German translations only—whether in the archives or in print. These accounts were meant to testify to the “truth” of conversion and act as incentives for other South Asians (as translations to other South Asian languages occurred through the English version). Therefore, it is not surprising that so many conversion accounts that made it to print were German or English translations. Or, when South Asian-language source texts were published, they were often published after the translation.<sup>11</sup>

There are no simple answers to the questions above. First, it is important to place the missionary archive in the wider context of the imperial project of history-making—translation into English indicated a translation into the “language of command” (Cohn 1996) and was part of a wider imperial archival rubric. Second, most conversion narratives have found their way into the archive only as translations because the source texts were often first oral narrations in a South Asian language that were then written down in a South Asian language, English, or German or written by South Asian converts or Europeans. In many cases, it was the missionary who transcribed his English or German translation of an oral conversion account, adding this written text as a “secondary original” to the mission archive. However, even when we have indirect evidence of a pre-existing written text in a South Asian language, only the translation has been preserved in the archive. In both cases, there is an erasure of the convert’s point of view (and by this we do not imply a harkening back to an original as the authentic truth about



conversion) unless mediated through translation. Translations were undertaken by missionaries or, when translated by South Asians, checked or edited by missionaries. In fact, translations were often published without the names of the South Asian translators but with the names of missionaries prominently displayed as editors.<sup>12</sup> In the circumstances, it is reasonable to argue that translations were a means of controlling what the converts relayed through the text. However, translation may have also been a possessive move to assert ownership over the narrative and the convert.<sup>13</sup> The omission of source texts could be interpreted as a means to establish—and defend against fellow missionaries—the unquestionable authority of the individual missionary claiming ownership of the translation. The missionary archive thus functions as the custodian of both the translated text and the convert’s story of conversion.

### Archaeological Recovery: An Unusual Instance of Survival

The spectacular conversion story of an eighteenth-century Tamil Hindu priest is available to us in three languages: German, English, and Tamil. The Tamil rendition (probably an oral narrative or testimony) appears to have been translated to present this conversion account to German and English audiences. It is a spectacular story because the conversion of a religious priest was always hailed as a particularly dramatic and difficult victory; priests were considered the most resistant of natives, and missionaries expected greater numbers of converts if they succeeded in convincing a respected religious leader to turn to Christianity. It is conjectured that this was the first Hindu priest to have accepted Christianity in the history of Protestant missions in Tamil-speaking South Asia. However, the story is spectacular for two other reasons, and more relevant to the present analysis. First, the documents contain the convert’s ‘voice’ in first-person narration within the main framing narrative, separated out and apparently cited in full. Second, the set of documents includes two letters exchanged between the convert and his fellow Saiva priests, displaying sharp criticism from the Hindu community.

The story of this conversion was recorded in German by Georg Heinrich Conrad Hüttemann (1728—1781),<sup>14</sup> a German theologian and missionary trained in Halle who worked for the British SPCK in the South Indian town of Cuddalore. Presumably, the account was first narrated in Tamil to Hüttemann. Hüttemann conveyed the news in a letter (written in German) to Halle in January 1764. This narrative was published in Halle (Saale) in 1765, and, almost immediately after, in an English translation in London. Seventy-five years later, the story was published in Tamil translation. The account thus travelled across languages and the narrative journeys full circle, back into Tamil, the language of the first oral narration.

According to this narrative, the convert priest’s name was Aruṇācalam Toṇṭamāṇ Mutali, but he is referred to in the narrative as Aruḷānanta. He was born near Maturai in 1737. Having studied at Tarmapuram, a centre of Saiva learning in South India, he was initiated as a Saiva Pantaram (priest of the Saivite sect) between 1751 and 1756. His conversion to Christianity transpired in 1763 when his name was changed. From 1764, he was schoolmaster of the Tamil school in Cuddalore, a small town in South India.

In the German version (1764/65), entitled, “Schreiben des Herrn Missionarii Hüttemanns zu Cudalur an den Editorem” [Letter from Mr. Missionarii Hüttemann at Cudalur

to the Editor], Hüttemann reports his interaction with the convert and the Hindus' reaction. The convert's autobiography is quoted verbatim, presented in first-person narration. Hüttemann adds a justification for employing the convert. There is a post scriptum in the form of two letters quoted verbatim: one, a warning from the head Saiva priest at Tarmapuram and the other, a convert's response to his erstwhile mentor. Explanatory footnotes are added to this account.

The English text (1764/65), entitled, *A Genuine Account of the remarkable Conversion of an INDIAN PRIEST to Christianity*, opens with an editor's introduction giving the history of the SPCK mission in India and includes Hüttemann's reports of his interaction with the convert and the Hindus' reaction. The convert's autobiography is then quoted verbatim, but the text is amended and footnotes are added. Hüttemann's justification of the employment of the convert is retained. The post scriptum includes the two letters quoted verbatim: the head priest's warning from Tarmapuram and the convert's response. Changes from the German are added in the footnotes.

The Tamil text (1841),<sup>15</sup> entitled "*Oru paṇṭāram maṇaṇantirumpiṇatai parri* (Conversion of a Pandarum)", comprises the editor's introduction with a short description of the convert's life and his contact with Hüttemann<sup>16</sup> and two letters quoted verbatim: the warning of the head priest at Tarmapuram and the response from the convert. Aruḷānanta's first-person narrative found in the German and English versions is entirely missing in this Tamil translation, ironical that this very feature should be missing from an autobiographical account of conversion. There is no context provided to frame the letters and no explanatory footnotes. This translation was published in a bilingual Tamil-English journal titled, *The Morning Star*, which was launched in 1841 by two Protestant Tamil converts, Henry Martyn and Seth Payson, who served as its editors under the aegis of the American Ceylon Mission in Jaffna (located in present-day Sri Lanka). The Tamil translation of the conversion account is published with no reference to either the English or German texts that precede it. The journal itself is significant in that its aim is to offer articles and opinion pieces in English and Tamil, with translation occurring in both directions (Israel 2016). Like many other nineteenth-century missionary journals, it often reprints accounts of conversion from different parts of the subcontinent. It is possible to trace the better-known accounts of conversion to Bengali or Marathi journals on which the Tamil translations are based. This created a network of accounts circulating across South Asia through translation. Since the journal was instituted in 1841, it is possible that the first such conversion account was sourced from Tamil rather than other language sources.

While the German and English translations were clearly meant for European audiences, the Tamil translation was meant for a Tamil audience in South India. To have the final version circulating in South Asia (in Tamil-speaking south India and northern Sri Lanka) translated back into Tamil nearly a hundred years later is ironic. By then, there would have been several other Hindu priests who had converted to Christianity, so the first excitement of the account is not as sharp or poignant. However, there is a desire to return to early stories, building in effect another archive, and, from thence construct a history for the Christian community. This set of translated texts, travelling across languages, linked to missionary print and archiving histories, from that of the German Pietist mission to the British SPCK and, finally,

to the American Ceylon Mission, functions here not merely as recollection of past events but as an aspiration, as a collective will to remember (Appadurai, 2003).

All three texts in some form or another signal the “fact” of translation. The rather modest German title, “Letter to the Editor,” is translated with significantly more adjectives in the English version. In the term “genuine” account of a “remarkable” conversion, we see a concern with authenticity (is the account genuine, or, is the conversion genuine, and does one equate to the other?), placing the account within an added set of concerns, framing its interpretation in specific directions. The use of the term “maṅantirumpu” in the Tamil title was a relatively new construct, literally meaning “turn heart” that had resulted from Christian translation projects of the eighteenth century looking to set up terminology that indicated Christian conversion as an act of turning away from the old and a turn to the new. The presence of this term in the title in the mid-nineteenth century indicates wider circulation of this language register within the Protestant Tamil community. Further, the English version has a note between the editor’s introduction and the text: “As the Case of this Proselyte is very singular, it is published at large in the Words of Mr *Hutteman*; and if any small Inaccuracies are observed in the Language of it, the Reader will be pleased to remember that the Translator is a *German*” (p. 3; emphasis in original). Amusing though this caveat is, it is important to note these minor comments that point to translation— rare instance of critique, interpretational space, and the possibility of failure acknowledged in the translation process that, more often than not, appears as a hidden, taken-for-granted activity that facilitates the work of mission and conversion. Additionally, it is significant that the first moment of Tamil utterance is still captured in German *translation* in the archive. What survives are only the traces of that voice in the three sets of documents.

### Conclusion:

The lack of both source and target texts in the translation dyad in the missionary archive poses ethical questions for scholars working with translation. Should one abandon the project if it is impossible to compare translations against their originals? Doing so would pose a far more serious ethical question—should translation researchers accept the discursive premise of archives as these present to them? Instead, it would be more productive to highlight the translation question, and read against the grain of archival projects that seek to represent or even limit the past in specific ways. Attending to translation’s ideological and material traces as “archaeologists” in the Foucauldian sense allows us to scrutinise the composition and formation of the missionary archive.

The complex ways in which texts point to other texts in other languages in the missionary archive invite us to term them “translation traces.” The missionary archive was built and functioned as a contact zone, producing, bringing together, and selecting texts from different language cultures, voices, and memories pointing to competing historical experiences. In many cases, however, fragments of information can only painstakingly be pieced together to get a glimpse of how the different language texts speak to one another. This evidence or trace of translation is visible not because of the efforts of the mission societies actively putting together multilingual archives but despite their efforts. Hundreds of documents written by South Asians in South Asian languages were not considered significant enough to archive. The missionary archive functioned for a European audience—to reassure

Europeans patrons and build a successful “history of European Christian mission” rather than the history of the peoples without whom the story is only partial. The original utterances in their own languages were not considered of archival significance. If it were not for such signalling towards translation, the partial, incomplete nature of the missionary archive would not have been as apparent. The traces of a few words recorded in documents remind us of the many complete stories that are lost—of much that is missing. However, paying attention to these fragmentary traces of translation reminds us of the different ways in which archives shape our understanding of the past as well as the present. These fragments can at the least challenge certain discourses as partial and serve as starting points for further lines of enquiry.

More significantly, the missionary archive functions here as an ideological space that ‘translated’—both literally and figuratively—a range of random artefacts into ‘historical evidence’ of South Asians and their conversion to Christianity. Attention to translation challenges the fixity of archival documentation and the kinds of controls that are imposed on documents by categorising and cataloguing. Equally, by not documenting source conversion accounts in most cases, do the translations acquire greater legitimacy in working towards a greater fixity of the past event? The differences between the three versions of Arulānanta’s conversion account point to slippages between life experience and documentation, identity and objectification—the apparent singularity of the decision and act of conversion and the multiplicities of reproduction through translation and print. The ability of translations to reinforce or challenge the project of the missionary archive (and a similar claim can arguably be made about other related archives such as the imperial archive) therefore deserves far greater attention. More scholarly attention on the role of translation, which has the ability to undermine the systems governing the process and purpose of archiving information, will also lead to valuable insights into the intersection between translation and history-making.

The production and establishment of a mission archive by Europeans has its merits. Many texts have been preserved (even if only in translation) that are or have become important or even constitutive for South Asian Christian Identity. However, ‘who holds the keys to the archive?’ (Reid and Paisley, 2017) is not yet a question that has been posed about the missionary archive. We need to keep in mind that the missionary archive was and is still constructed, organized, maintained, and reshuffled by European institutions and funding agencies. It is important also to uncover these formations and processes to understand their continued impact on South Asian Christian identity and the relationship between European and South Asian churches.

Our research, involving a critical look at the missionary archive, also opens lines of enquiry regarding other forms of cultural preservation and archiving. How can we access the ritual and social practices of (especially, low-caste) South Asian Protestant Christians that leave no textual trace in the first place? How would one investigate activities that involve religious and linguistic translation in other faith traditions but function differently with hardly any centralized repositories of texts, such as, Jaina, Saiva or Sufi archives, which allegedly focus less on the faithful translations of written texts (although they exist, too) but lay more emphasis on (oral/enacted) narratives, material culture, space, myths, rituals in translation? Other forms of translation and their relation to other systems of remembering and archiving are well worth researching further.

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<sup>1</sup> The project entitled, 'Conversion, Translation and the Language of Autobiography'

(<http://www.ctla.llc.ed.ac.uk/>) was funded by the AHRC as part of their Translating Cultures theme.

<sup>2</sup> We use the term colonial South Asia to refer to the territories (and materials produced in these territories) that were governed by the British colonial administration. This term includes territories, such as Jaffna, that lie in the modern-day Republic of Sri Lanka and therefore outside the current political boundary of India. When referring to publications and contexts after 1947, we use current names of independent countries, that is, India or Sri Lanka.

<sup>3</sup> We use this term as a broad category to refer collectively to all the archives set up by European and North American Protestant Christian missionary societies from the eighteenth century onwards rather than to the archives of individual societies as many of the attitudes to translation discussed in this article are common to these archives. We are aware that a study of Catholic archives, of which the Vatican's would be principal, may yield entirely different results. However, this requires much further in-depth comparative study which is beyond the scope of this article.

<sup>4</sup> See for example the work of mission historians represented in edited volumes such as Robert E. Frykenberg (2003) and Frykenberg and Brown (2002)

<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, at a popular level, some of the book-length and established conversion accounts did circulate within the South Asian Christian community. Reprints, new translations and editions continue to be sold at Christian bookstores across the country. These are, however, just a handful of accounts compared to what can be found in the missionary archives.

<sup>6</sup> For a detailed discussion of shifts in meaning and emphases in translation, see Israel (2018), Dandekar (2018) and Frenz (2018).

<sup>7</sup> Archived in Special collections, Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham.

<sup>8</sup> CMS/B/OMS/C 12 0206 Nos. 588, 589 and 590 (1868)

<sup>9</sup> CMS/B/OMS/C 12 098 No. 87

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<sup>10</sup> For example, there are three key missionaries associated with the development of the Tamil language alone—Constantin Beschi, Robert Caldwell and G. U. Pope—and at least one such missionary scholar dedicated their energies to studying each of the Indian languages.

<sup>11</sup> A good example is of Baba Padmanji's Marathi conversion account *Arunodaya* published in 1908 after the publication of its English translation, *Once Hindu, Now Christian. The early life of Baba Padmanji. An Autobiography*, in 1890.

<sup>12</sup> Padmanji's *Once Hindu, Now Christian* was published with the Scottish missionary J Murray Mitchell's name on the title page as editor with no indication of translator's name.

<sup>13</sup> For a more detailed discussion, please see Israel (2018)

<sup>14</sup> "Hüttemann" is the correct spelling in the German text, which is how the author signed his diary of 1755 and how the name appears in all printed German texts. However, three spelling variations appear later in the text: Hüttemann, Hutteman, Huttiman. Further, there is one exception to the way Hüttemann signs his name: in his German letter to Francke, in which he tells the Pandaram story (dated 12 Jan 1764), he signs with "George Hutteman".

<sup>15</sup> Please note that the title includes both Tamil and English but not in exact translation.

<sup>16</sup> In this text, Hüttemann is referred to as 'Attiman' [Tamil transliteration] and 'Huttiman' [Latin].